

How to

RECRUIT TO SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

A *GUIDE FOR ALL MEMBERS*



www.socialistalternative.org

This is a very exciting time for Socialist Alternative. We have the very real potential to build a national organization with branches in all major cities and regions with upwards of 1,000 members. Such an organization could play a huge role in rebuilding a strong workers movement while putting forward a genuine socialist alternative to the rotten capitalist system.

These goals will only be achieved if all members of our organization play a role in recruitment. Even our newest members are capable of recruiting new people. However, there are some basic tips worth sharing to make sure recruitment is done with the best chance of success.

To recruit to Socialist Alternative, our members need to have some understanding of how to:

- **Organize contact discussions**
- **Sign up new members**
- **Consolidate new members**

Contact discussions

A “contact” is anyone with whom we’ve made contact and who may be interested in joining our organization. If you are not sure if someone is a contact, ask them if they could see themselves joining an organization like Socialist Alternative. Their answer should give you an indication whether or not you should attempt to organize a contact discussion with them.

Try to make a time to meet up again while you are speaking with them, but if it’s not possible, getting a phone number is always better than just an email. As a general rule we should follow up contacts within 48 hours.

It is important to plan the discussion beforehand. Organize to bring someone from your branch with you to your contact discussion so more members can gain experience in recruiting.

Think about what you already know about your contact and where they are coming from politically. What issues particularly interest them? You might want to bring along some material we have published on those issues. How much do they already know about history, politics, and socialism? Can you skip over some topics that they already understand and agree with, or do you need to start with the basics?

While you always want to organize your contact discussions based on what you know about your contact, there are some things you should always bring:

- 1. A membership application form**
- 2. The latest copy of our newspaper**
- 3. Fliers for upcoming events**
- 4. A sustainer form**

(Good socialist organizers have these things on them at all times!)

There is no ‘correct’ thing to say to convince contacts to join. Each person will be convinced by different aspects of our work, theory and program, depending on their experience, background and interests. The only way you can know how to convince someone that Socialist Alternative is the organization for them is to first listen to what they have to say.

The first step is to ask your contact questions about themselves and how they became interested in politics/activism. Some other useful questions to ask are: What issues are important to you? Do you already consider yourself a socialist?

Overall, allow your contact to do at least half the talking. Make sure not to dominate the discussion.

Remember, you may be the only person your contact has met who agrees with their Left-wing or progressive ideas! If you have a discussion where there is some agreement and some disagreement, focus on the points of agreement before moving on to any points of disagreement. Remember that contacts do not have to agree with everything Socialist Alternative

stands for before they join. There is always room for further discussion later down the track.

One of the best tools to use during contact discussions is the paper. If you are setting up a contact discussion, ask them to read the paper before you meet. This will give you a number of topics to discuss. If they haven't yet read the paper, you can still use the topics covered in the paper for discussion. The paper editorial board chose those topics for a reason! The aim of the paper is to relate to consciousness as it exists, and point people towards socialist solutions. This is also the aim of contact discussions. If people agree with what is written in our paper it is a good indication that we should ask them to join.

Don't worry, you don't need to know the answer to every question. If your contact asks you a question you don't know the answer to, it is absolutely fine to say that you don't know, but that you can find out for them.

The key point you need to draw out of each discussion is how the problems people face are either caused by or are linked to the capitalist system, and how we can never solve those problems within the framework of capitalism. Explain that is why we need to fight for democratic socialism and build an organisation capable of leading that struggle.

Socialist Alternative and the Committee for a Workers' International have proud histories of real struggle. Don't shy away from talking about our successes. People will want to be part of an effective organisation and we want people to be excited about what we can achieve!

At the end of your discussion you should have a sense of where the person stands. Are they:

- i. Ready to become a member

If your discussion goes well, ask them to join! When asking someone to join you should point out why they can play an important role in our

organization. If they generally agree with our ideas, or are open to our ideas and excited about the work of our organization, then we should ask them to join. (See the next section ‘Signing up new members’)

2. Still a contact

Your discussion may have gone well, but your contact still may not be ready to join. Ask them why that is and what they think would help them make up their mind. Suggest that they take out a subscription to the paper to find out more, and make a judgement whether inviting them to a branch meeting might help.

Whatever your next step, make sure you organize a clear plan to meet again. This might be before an action or before a branch meeting, that you could then invite them to after your discussion. Also consider if there is someone in your branch who your contact might relate well to, and bring them to your next discussion.

3. A supporter, but not a member

Some contacts will not be interested or suitable to become a member of Socialist Alternative. However, they may still be able to support us in some way. Ask them if they would become a sustainer, to help fund our work. Ask them to take out a subscription to the paper, even if they don't fully agree. If appropriate, ask if they would like to be invited to major events in the future.

Even if someone doesn't want to join, it can be useful to keep some type of contact with them. They may become good allies in unions or political campaigns, and the barriers to them joining now may shift in the future.

Whichever category they fall into, don't be shy asking people to make a commitment! This is true whether you're asking them to join the organization or simply asking them to give a donation.

Don't forget to report back to your branch organizer (or recruitment organizer) after doing contact work.

Signing up new members

Before someone joins, we want to make sure they are moving toward and will likely arrive at the following key conclusions:

- 1. Confidence in the working class as the key agent of social change**
- 2. The need to fight for public ownership of all the big corporations under the democratic control of elected representatives of the workers and the wider public**
- 3. The need to sever ties with the capitalist parties and work to build an independent workers' party**
- 4. That we are a revolutionary organization that fights for reforms to build a movement strong enough to get rid of capitalism and replace it with democratic socialism.**

Generally we would want a new member to agree with 90% of our “What We Stand For” column in our newspaper.

If you’re confident of these things, it’s time to sign up your contact as a new member!

Signing up a new member is not just a matter of filling out a membership form - though please make sure the form is filled out so we have their full contact details. New members also need to have discussions about three key things:

Membership dues

An important aspect of membership is making a financial contribution to the organization through membership dues. This importance needs to be made clear so new members are conscious of the dues and start on the highest possible dues they can afford. While we don’t want finances to be a barrier to membership, we also want to encourage, as a starting point,

new members to consider contributing 5-10% of their wage per month.

Activity

It's important that new members understand that we are an active, democratic organisation. This means we want all members to be involved in the campaigning work, fight for our ideas and be involved in political discussions in the organization. This involves attending branch meetings as often as possible, selling the paper, and getting involved in struggle.

Education

Every new member should be sold a New Member Education Program when they join. It is crucial that we deepen the political understanding of new members as soon as they join. The following political discussions should be planned in conjunction with your Branch Organizer.

Consolidating new members

When someone agrees to join Socialist Alternative, this is just the beginning. The first few months of membership are key to integrating new members into the organisation. Make sure you keep in regular contact with new members you have recruited during this time. Sometimes people have questions, but are too shy to ask them in branch meetings. You should continue to ask their opinions and encourage them to share their thoughts.

Ultimately new members are more likely to remain members if they have thorough political understanding of our organisation and our work. Your political discussions should not end when your contact becomes a comrade!